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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM NewsWatch

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SUBJECT Covert Operations

BERNARD SHAW: The CIA is denying it was directly or indirectly involved in a terrorist-style bombing that killed 80 people in Beirut last March. Published reports say a CIA-trained hit squad was responsible for the car-bombing and that it stemmed from the Reagan Administration's effort to counteract terrorism.

CNN's Jim Miklaszewski reports news of the possible U.S. involvement may put a serious crimp in the entire anti-terrorist campaign.

JIM MIKLASZEWSKI: Though it normally does not comment on reports of covert activity, the CIA denies it had any part in the March 8th Beirut car-bombing that killed more than 80 and wounded 200. The unusual statement came in response to reports that CIA-trained anti-terrorists had the bomb planted in an attempt to assassinate a militant Shiite Moslem believed responsible for the bombings at the U.S. Embassy and Marine headquarters in 1983.

Although the CIA denies involvement in the bombing, the agency does not deny it has been training Lebanese in counter-terrorist tactics.

SECRETARY OF STATE GEORGE SHULTZ: I think we can tell the difference between the use and abuse of power. The use of power is legitimate not when it crushes the human spirit and tamples human freedom, but when it can help liberate a people or support the yearning for freedom. Not when it imposes an alien will on an unwilling people, but when its aim is to bring peace or to support peaceful processes, when it prevents others from abusing their power through aggression or oppression.

MIKLASZEWSKI: Both Secretary of State George Shultz and National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane have said the U.S. must be willing to use force and launch preemptive strikes against terrorists.

But the latest reports have raised serious doubts on Capitol Hill over the use of terrorist-style tactics to counter terrorism.

REP. PATRICIA SCHROEDER: What in the world are we doing using tax dollars to finance hit squads in the Middle East? Even if they are people who were supposed to be under cover, the word is out now.

MIKLASZEWSKI: Senator Patrick Leahy of the Senate Intelligence Committee says he plans an investigation into the March 8th bombing and other reports of CIA covert activity.

But Congressman Samuel Stratton says Congress may be zeroing in on the wrong targets.

REP. SAMUEL STRATTON: To suggest that this is somehow okay for the Moslems and not for the Americans seems to me to be a tragic simplification.

MIKLASZEWSKI: Administration officials also say that reports the U.S. may have been involved in the car-bombing jeopardize the lives of U.S. citizens in Lebanon and the five Americans still being held hostage there.

Despite the CIA's denial of any involvement in the bombing, the reports point out the Administration's anti-terrorist campaign is mired in a serious Catch-22: that America appears unwilling to engage in anti-terrorism if terrorism itself is a tactic.

*Terrorist style
bombing in
Beirut. Comments
by Secretary of
State George
Shultz, Rep.
Patricia Schroeder
and Rep. Samuel*